

358 EMILE ZOLA, NOVELIST AND
KEFOEMEE,

these that Pauline has to minister, for these that she has to sacrifice herself, even as it often happens that the good have to lay down their lives for the unworthy.

Pauline, one has said, is very different from her mother, Lisa. Equally different is Lisa's sister, Gervaise, the pathetic heroine of "L'Assommoir" (XIII), with which the family chronicle is continued. Lisa rises, Gervaise falls; so does it happen in many of the world's families. Zola has now descended through several strata of society, and has come to the working classes. A deep pathos lies beneath the picture he traces of them under the bane of drink. At first Gervaise appears so courageous amid her misfortunes that one can readily grant her the compassionate sympathy accorded to every trusting woman whom a coward abandons. There seems hope for her at the outset of her marriage with Coupeau; a possibility, too, that she may prove successful when, industrious and energetic, she starts her little laundry business. But her husband's lazy, drunken ways recoil on her, the return of the rascally Lantier completes her misfortune, and then she rolls down hill, to die at last of starvation. The stage of "L'Assommoir" is crowded with typical figures, some of them perchance imperishable, for their names have passed into the French language to serve as designations for one and another degraded character that

one encounters in every-day life. Yet all the personages of Zola's work are not depraved. Even in this dark book there are a few who point to the brighter side of human nature, honest G-oujet, for instance, and Lalie, the poor, pitiful "little mother." G-ervaise and Coupeau themselves are not wholly vile. In the midst-of. their degradation, when she prowls the boulevard ia the snow, when te is